

REMARKS

In the Office action identified above, the examiner has again rejected claims 17-26 and 32-39 as being anticipated under 35 USC §102(b) by the Neher reference and has made the rejection final. Claims 28-31 and 40 were allowed.

The rejection of claims 17-26 and 32-39 is not believed to be justified and is therefore traversed. As stated in the amendment filed July 9, 2004, applicant's decoupling device, as deferred in the rejected claims, requires at least two sets of decoupling elements engaged by an actuator and a securing element. In this regard, the claims have been amended to make it clear that the term "set" requires a plurality of individual decoupling elements. Thus, independent claims 17 and 39 specifically require "at least two sets of decoupling elements each consisting of a plurality of decoupling elements", which dependent claims 20 and 33 state that each set of decoupling elements comprises a pair of decoupling elements. In this regard, the language added to these claims by the requested amendments does not alter the scope of the claims, but merely emphasizes the fact that the term "set" is used in its ordinary sense to mean a number of things naturally connected by location, formation or order. Thus, the requested amendments are believed proper after final rejection.

It is respectfully submitted that one skilled in the art would not arrive at the claimed decoupling device from the Neher reference. Neher clearly discloses and teaches the use of one-piece decoupling elements. See, for example, column 1, lines 37-44, and column 2, lines 20-36 of Neher where it is clearly stated that the "cushioning" element 11 is a one-piece molded rubber member having opposed, ball-shaped ends engaging opposite forces of the support member. The

ball-shaped ends are joined by a necked-down connection portion 13 which engages the opening 10 in the flat end portion 9 of the support arms 6, whereby the necked-down portion is employed as a resilient load-absorbing element providing the yielding support for the metal arms 6.

The examiner's position that the support arms 6 of Neher are disposed between two sets of decoupling elements is not believed to be justified. Each support arm 6 engages a single decoupling element at its mid-section, with the decoupling element being engaged or clamped by the bracket 14. The examiner's statement that Fig. 3 of Neher shows "two decoupling devices 11 and 12, disposed in pairs" is not understood; Neher designates the decoupling element generally by the reference numeral 11, and the opposed ball-shaped ends of "cushioning element 11" are designated by the reference numeral 12.

In contrast to the Neher device, each of applicant's rejected claims positively requires at least two sets of decoupling elements, each set consisting of a plurality of decoupling elements, with a retaining element located between the decoupling elements of each set. This arrangement applies only compression loads or shear loads to the decoupling elements, not beam, or bending loads as in Neher.

Since Neher only discloses one-piece decoupling elements employed between a support arm and a clamping element, it is submitted that this arrangement does not suggest, even in hindsight, the structure defined in claims 20, 33 and 35 which require each set of decoupling elements to comprise a pair of decoupling elements.

Similarly, Neher does not disclose nor suggest the use of pairs of decoupling elements connected by an intermediate piece. The connecting member serves only to join two decoupling

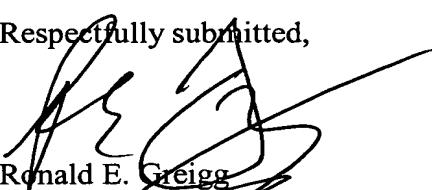
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members for handling and assembly, and serve no decoupling function.

Claims 18-26 and 32-38 depend, either directly or indirectly from claim 17 and therefore include the limitation to at least two sets of decoupling elements with each set consisting of a plurality of decoupling elements, with the securing element extender between and engaging the sets of decoupling elements. Since Neher does not disclose or suggest the use of multiple sets of decoupling elements, it is respectfully submitted that these elements are not anticipated nor rendered obvious by the Neher.

Claims 26 and 38 have been amended to positively recite the curved surfaces of the decoupling elements to provide proper antecedent basis for the later reference to the curved surface in these claims.

In view of the above requested amendments to the claims, and of the comments contained herein, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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